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The wreath of fashion



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T H E
WREATH of FASHION,
OR, THE
Art of Sentimental Poetry.

—————*Demetri, teq. Tigelli,*
Discipularum inter jubeo plorare cathedras.

HORACE.

THE FOURTH EDITION.

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A D V E R T I S E M E N T.

TH E following lines were occasioned by the Author's having lately studied, with infinite attention, several fashionable productions in the *Sentimental* stile; in most of which, a misapplication, not a defect, of talents seems to have betrayed their Authors into some degree of false Taste. For example. A Noble Author has lately published his works, which consist of *three* compositions. *One*, an Ode upon the death of Mr. Gray: the *two* others, upon the death of his Lordship's *Spaniel*.

But the reigning fashion in modern *poesy* is *Sentimental Panegyric* on *Married Beauties*. This appears in a thousand various Shapes; from *Bouts Rhimeès* on the *wou'd-be Sappho* of Bath, up to *Doggerel Epistles* to the lovely *Amoret*.

In attempting to ridicule this modish folly, it is scarcely necessary to apologize to the several Personages of the *Sentimental train*, for introducing their names. When a Poet announces himself, and publicly

publicly wears his Laurels, He is lawful game for the Critics: And it makes no difference, whether his works come from the Press, or, according to Sir *Benjamin Backbite's* system, "*circulate in Manuscript.*" Besides, to canvass the *slighter imperfections*, either of stile or of conduct, seems to be the limit of poetical censure. It is only the desperate Satyrist, whose invenomed pen strikes at the character and honour of Individuals, that perverts and disgraces Poetry:---Such aspersions, if well founded, are too gross for the tribunal of the Muses; and it, (as is generally the case) they are utterly false, they recoil not only on the Author, but on the very art itself, which can so easily be perverted to so bad a Purpose. --- But who can be hurt by a Critique on his *Charades* and *Rebuffes*?---An imputation of false Taste may not be very pleasant, but it never can seriously offend Men of sense and good-breeding: Both which qualities, as the Author agrees with all the world in acknowledging *his Personages* to possess in the highest degree, so he requests that not only they, but the few others who may happen to read his Poem, will acquit him of any intention to give the slightest offence.

T H E

W R E A T H of F A S H I O N.

W H E N first the Muse recorded Beauty's praise
In glowing numbers, and enraptur'd lays,
Sweet was the Poet's song; undeck'd by art;
For Love was Nature, and his theme the heart.
At Beauty's shrine how brightly Genius glow'd! 5
There, her wild wreaths luxuriant fancy strew'd;
Whose flowrets, wak'd by Love's enliv'ning ray,
Scatter'd with native sweets the artless lay.
Such were the strains th' enamour'd *Ovid* sung;
Such the fond lays that flow'd from *Prior*'s tongue: 10

B

Nor

Nor of its best reward was verse beguil'd,
 When *Julia* own'd its pow'r, and *Chloe* smil'd.

Far other lays denote the modern Bard---
 Nor love his theme---nor Beauty his reward :
 His temp'rate verse a gentler homage pays, 15
 And sighs serenely for unfeeling praise.

This purer taste, this philosophic art,
 (If thou, O Sentiment ! thy aid impart)
 The Muse shall sing---attend ye glitt'ring train
 Of fighting Beaux, nor scorn the votive strain ; 20
 Tho' harsh the verse, tho' rude the unpolish'd lay,
 Soft is the tender science they display.

First, for true grounds of Sentimental lore,
 The scenes of modern Comedy explore ;
 Dramatic Homilies ! devout and sage, 35
 Stor'd with wise maxims, " both for youth and age."

Maxims

Maxims, that scorning their old homely drefs,
 Shift from plain proverbs to spruce sentences,
 But chief, let *Cumberland* thy Muse direct :
 High Priest of all the Tragic-comic sect ! 30
 Mid darts and flames his Lover *cooly* waits ;
 Calm as a Hero, cas'd in *Hartley's plates* ;
 'Till damp'd, and chill'd, by sentimental sighs,
 Each stifled passion in a vapour dies..

Hence form thy taste, hence strew thy temp'rate lays
 With moral raptures, and sententious praise.

Thus skill'd, with critic care, thy subject choose ;
 A kindred theme, congenial to thy Muse.
 No giddy Nymph, of youth and beauty vain,
 But some fair Stoic, link'd in Hymen's chain : 40
 Serene and cold ; by wise Indiff'rence led
 To a rich Title, and a---sep'rate bed.

Now, sick of vanity, with grandeur cloy'd,
 She leans on Sentiment, to sooth the void :
 Deep in Rousseau, her purer thoughts approve 45
 The Metaphysics of Platonic Love.
 Thine be the task, with quaint, fantastic phrase,
 To variegate her unimpassion'd praise.

Poetic Compliments from Sonnets cull---
 Harmonious quibbles, logically dull ! 50
 True to their age of Paradox, they chime
 Problems in verse, and sophistry in rhyme---
 Yet, thro' these *lymbecks*, Cowley's patient Muse
 From mimic sighs distill'd Castalian dew ;
 So Spencer toil'd, to sooth the Royal Maid ; 55
 So hapless Petrarch wept his Laura's shade.

But hence, tame Precept !---let example lead
 The modish Poet to his glorious meed :

Haste, to the radiant shrine of Fashion, haste!
 There, form thy genius, there, correct thy taste. 60

And lo! the glitt'ring Altar stands confest!
 Loofe o'er the Goddess floats her motley vest:
 As Flora, gay, as Iris, wildly bright,
 Its varying lustre strikes the dazzled sight.
 Here, Vanity, with flow'rs and feathers crown'd, 65
 Sports with the Seasons thro' their airy round.
 Here, spurious Art and mimic Science pour
 Whims of a day, and theories of an hour.
 The Goddess smiles; for, lo! even Poets trace
 Her local charms, her temporary grace--- 70
 Above the rest, how fondly she regards
 Her fav'rite train, the Sentimental Bards!

On a spruce pedestal of *Wedgwood ware*;
 Where motley forms, and tawdry emblems glare,

C

Behold

Behold she consecrates to cold applause,
 A Petrefaction, work'd into a *Vase* :
 The Vase of Sentiment !---to this impart
 Thy kindred coldness, and congenial art.
 Here, (as in humbler scenes, from *Cards* and *Gout*,
Millar convenes her literary Rout)
 With votive song, and tributary verse,
 Fashion's gay train her gentle rites rehearse.
 What soft poetic incense breathes around !
 What soothing hymns from Adulation sound !

Here, placid *Carlisle* breathes his gentle line, 85
 Or haply, gen'rous *Hare*, re-echoes thine :
 Soft flows the lay ; as when, with tears, He paid
 The last sad honours to his---Spaniel's shade !
 And lo ! he grasps the badge of wit, a wand ;
 He waves it thrice, and *Storer* is at hand ; 90
 Famish'd

Famish'd as penance, as devotion pale,
 Plaintive, and pert, He murmurs a Love-tale.
Fitzpatrick's Muse waits for some lucky hit ;
 For, still the slave of Chance, He *throws* at wit.
 While *Townshend* his pathetic bow displays, 95
 And Princely Boothby silent homage pays.

With *chips* of wit, and mutilated lays,
 See *Palmerston* finer his *Bout's Rhimeès* ;
 Fav'rite of ev'ry Muse, elect of Phœbus,
 To string Charades, or fabricate a Rebus. 100
 Bereft of such a guide, old Ocean, mourn
 Thy fading glories, and thy laurels torn ! *
 'Twas *Palmerston* repell'd each hostile wrong,
 Like Ariel, wrecking Navies with---a Song ;

* Upon Lord Palmerston's appointment to the Treasury, Lord Melgrave succeeded to his Place at the Admiralty Board. — "*Mira canam ; Sol occubuit, nox nulla secuta est.*"

But see, by pitying Fate his loss supplied; 105
 For *Mulgrave* joins where sense and *Sandwich* guide.
Mulgrave! whose Muse nor winds nor waves controul,
 Could bravely pen Acrostics---on *the Pole*:
 Warm with poetic fire the Northern air,
 And sooth with tuneful raptures--*the great Bear*; 110.
 Join but his poetry to *Burgoyne's* prose,
 Armies shall *fall asleep*; and *Pyrates* *dōze*.
 So when the rebel-winds on Neptune fell;
 They sunk to rest, at sound of Triton's shell.

“ If *Placemen* thus poetic honours prize, 115
 “ Shall I be mute?” (the laureat *Whitehead* cries.)
 “ What if some rival Bard my empire share!
 “ Yet, yet, I tremble at the name of *Clare*. *

“ *Pindar*

* Whoever has read his Lordship's verses, presented to her Majesty, with a gift of *Irish Poplin*, and that too on a *New Year's Day*, will not wonder at the jealousy and apprehension the Laureat expresses of

- “ *Pindar* to *Clare* had yielded---so did I---
 “ Alas, can Poetry wth *Poplin* vie! 120
 “ Ah me! if Poets *barter* for applause,
 “ How *Ferningham* will thrive on flimsy *gauze*!
 “ What tatter’d tinsel *Luttrel* will display!
 “ *Carmarthen* fatten---*Carlisle* paduasoy!
 “ *Garrick* will follow his old remnant trade; 125
 “ He’ll buy my place with *Jubilee* brocade.
 “ While *Anstey*, the reversion to obtain,
 “ Vamps his *Bath drugget*, till he spoils the grain.
 “ Perish the thought! hence visionary fear!
 “ Phœbus, or Phædrus, shall old *Whitehead* cheer. 130
 “ Behold their nobler gift---be this preferr’d!”
 ---He said--and proudly brandish’d the *Goat’s beard*,

of so formidable a rival.—The recollection of the Poplin leads to a digression, in the Pindaric style of all Laureats, on the fatal consequences that might follow from establishing Lord Clare’s method of tacking a present to every Poem—but the Laureat recovers his spirits, by thinking of the last production of his own Muse—the *Goat’s Beard*—spun from Ten lines of Phædrus, to Four Hundred of Whitehead.—

Then dropt it in the *Vase*---immers'd it falls
 Mid Sonnets, Odes, Acrostics, Madigrals :
 A motley heap of metaphoric figs--- 135
 Laborious griefs, and studied extasies---
 Yet hence how warm each tuneful Suppliant's claim !
 What palpitations for his *mite* of fame !
 Alas ! regardless of their equal toils,
 Fashion still wildly scatters random smiles. 140
 And Colman *may* (if Billy Woodfall's by
 To prop him up) attract her vagrant eye.

Behold, one dunce, by her profound decree;
 Supreme Dictator of the Coterie :
 Prim, plausible, oracular, and sage, 145
 The native *Texier* of the wond'ring age !
 The solemn coxcomb never talks---his frown
 Is constant obloquy, his smile renown :

Words

Words would degrade this literary God :

He gives his fiat with a silent nod.

150

Another's fame more gentle honour, tell ;
 Familiar Critic of each bright *Ruelle* !
 Soon as the orient beam of Beauty's ray
 Discloses, just at noon, the dawn of day ;
 And *Dev'nshire* wakes!---" *and Piccadilly's gay* ;" 155
 Perch'd at her Grace's toilet, *Minim* fits,
 The little Scholiast of the Female Wits.
 Tir'd of conjecture, and perplex'd with doubt,
 To him they fly---to make a riddle out ;
 To pierce a paragraph's mysterious veil ;
 And eke out Scandal's hesitating tale.
 With conscious pride the flippant Witling shares
 His motley task of miscellaneous cares ;
 Expounds *Charades*, thro' close detraction pryes,
 Construes *initials*, and the *blanks* supplies.

160

165

And

And oft, with varied art, his thoughts digress:
 On deeper themes---the documents of dress :
 With nice discernment, to each stile of face
 Adapt a ribbon, or suggest a lace ;
 O'er *Granby's* cap bid loftier feathers float, 170
 And add new bows to *Devon's* petticoat.---

Others, resolv'd more ample fame to boast,
 Plant their own Laurels in the *Morning Post*.
 Soft *Evening* dews refresh the tender green :
 Pass but a Month, it swells each *Magazine* ; 175
 'Till the luxuriant bows so wildly shoot,
 The *Annual Register* transplants the root---
 But these are spurious honours, not the true,
 Who shall obtain *The Wreath of Fashion*---who ?

The *wily Charles* long flourish'd o'er the rest ; 180
 Expert to argue or to flatter best :

For,

For, born a Disputant, a Sophist bred,
 His Nurfe He filenc'd, and his Tutor led :
 But hail'd, with filial duty's pious fenfe,
 His Sire's beft gift---delufive Eloquence. 185
 That art to cherifh, with a lavish pride
 His kindred Genius ev'ry pow'r fupplied :
 Perfuaſion's breath---to ſwell the Statesman's fail :
 Or, if his fancy veer, retard the gale.
 Soft words---to mollify the Miſer's breaſt, 190
 And lull relenting Ufury to reſt.
 Bright beams of wit---to ſtill the raging Jew ;
 His black'ning miſts diſſolve to golden dew,
 Teach him to dun no more, and lend anew !

Here, *Charles* his native eloquence refin'd ; 195
 Pleas'd at the Toilet, in the Senate ſhin'd :
 And North approv'd---and *Amoret* look'd kind,

'Till, fond too soon his selfish pride to trace,
He lost at once his laurels and---his place.

At Fashion's shrine, behold a gentler Bard, 203
Gaze on the mystic *Vase* with fond regard---
But see, Thalia checks the doubtful thought.
"Can'st thou (she cries) with sense, with genius fraught,
" Can'st thou to Fashion's tyranny submit,
" Secure in native, independent wit? 205
" Or yield to Sentiment's insipid rule,
" By Taste, by Fancy, chac'd thro' *Scandal's School*?
" Ah, no!---be *Sheridan's* the comic page;
" Or let me fly with *Garrick* from the Stage."

Haste then, my Friend, (for let me boast that name)
Haste to the op'ning path of genuine Fame:
Or, if thy Muse a gentler theme pursue,
Ah, 'tis to Love, and thy Eliza, due!

For sure the sweetest lay she well may claim,
 Whose soul breathes harmony o'er all her frame ; 215
 While wedded Love, with ray serenely clear,
 Beams from her eye, as from its proper sphere.

--But thou, for whom the Muse first tun'd the lyre,
 Vot'ry of Sentiment, do thou aspire,
 With studious toil, to win that bright reward, 220
The Wreath of Fashion for her chosen Bard.
 Not rudely wove with Nature's short-liv'd store,
 (The simple meed her humble Poet wore)
 But spruce and trim, as suits thy kindred pow'rs,
 With mimic buds, and artificial flow'rs. 225

Blest Wreath! whose flowrets dread no vulgar doom
 Of fading hues, or transitory bloom ;
 Above the fleeting pride of Flora's day,
 Thy vivid foliage never can decay !

There

There, vi'lets, pinks, and lilies of the vale, 230

Despise the sultry beam, or chilly gale ;

There, fix'd as *Archer's* rouge, the mimic rose,

With persevering blush, for ever glows ;

There, myrtles bloom, that shame the Cyprian fields ;

There, bays, immortal as Parnassus yields--- 235

Triumphant art ! Let vanquish'd nature mourn
Her lost simplicity, o'er *Shenstone's* urn :

With sympathetic sorrows, on *his* tomb

Let the pale primrose shed its wild perfume ;

The cowslip droop its head ; and all around 240

The with'ring violet strew the hallow'd ground---

For, mute the swain, and cold the hand, that wove

Their simple sweets to wreaths of artless love---

Simplicity with *Shenstone* died!---

T H E E N D.

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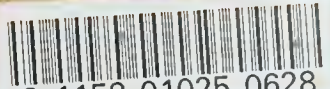
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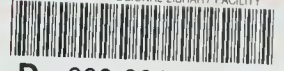
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